

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 31, 2003

The Honorable Jerry Lewis  
H 149 Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Murtha  
2423 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Lewis and Ranking Member Murtha:

There are 40,000 women who die each year of breast cancer. We do not yet know how to prevent the disease. We do not have an accurate, reliable early detection method. And we do not have a cure for women. This year alone, more than 258,000 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer. This is a serious health issue that must be addressed and must be made a national priority. While we do not have the answers, we do have the best scientists and medical research community in the world. We are confident that with the right investments we can find a cure.

You and your Subcommittee have shown great determination and leadership in the search for answers by funding the Department of Defense (DOD) Peer-Reviewed Breast Cancer Research Program (BCRP) at a level that has brought us closer to eradicating this disease. The DOD BCRP's decade of progress in the fight against breast cancer has been made possible by this Subcommittee's investment in breast cancer research.

To continue this unprecedented progress, we ask that you support a \$175 million appropriation for fiscal year (FY) 2004. Over the past two years, the Conference Committee has cut Defense Health Programs across the board by 15% - bringing funding for the DOD BCRP to \$150 million for FY 2003. Unfortunately, there continues to be excellent science that goes unfunded, which is why we believe that the BCRP should be appropriated \$175 million for FY 2004.

In the span of only ten years, the DOD BCRP has established itself as model medical research program, respected throughout the cancer community for its innovative and accountable approach. The groundbreaking research performed through the program has the potential to benefit not just breast cancer, but all cancers, as well as other diseases.

Since the program's inception, there have been incredible discoveries at a very rapid rate that offer fascinating insights into the biology of breast cancer. The program funded a vital component of the revolutionary work that led to the development of the innovative drug Herceptin, the first monoclonal antibody in the war against cancer. From new methods of extracting breast cancer cells at their earliest stages to unprecedented research into gene/environment interaction to quality of life issues, this program leads the way in generating new approaches to breast cancer prevention, treatment, and early detection. These discoveries have brought into sharp focus the areas of research that hold promise and will build on the investment we have made.

The DOD BCRP is as efficient as it is innovative. In fact, 90% of funds go directly to research grants. The program responds quickly to current scientific advances, and fills gaps by focusing on research that is traditionally under-funded. It is also responsive, not just to the scientific community, but to the public. This is evidenced by the inclusion of consumer advocates at both the peer and programmatic review levels. The consumer perspective helps the scientists understand how the research will affect the community, and allows for funding decisions based on the concerns and needs of patients and the medical community.

The DOD BCRP not only provides a funding mechanism for high-risk, high-return research, but also reports the results of this research to the American people at a biennial public meeting called the "Era of Hope." The 1997 meeting was the first time a federally-funded program reported back to the public in detail not only on the funds used, but also on the research undertaken, the knowledge gained from that research, and future directions to be pursued. The transparency of the BCRP allows scientists, consumers and the American public to see the exceptional progress made in breast cancer research.

At the 2002 Era of Hope meeting, all BCRP award recipients from fiscal years 1998-2000 were invited to report their research findings and many awardees from previous years were asked to present advancements in their research. Scientists reported important advances in the study of cancer development at the molecular and cellular levels. Researchers presented the results of research that elucidates several genes and proteins responsible for the spread of breast cancer to other parts of the body, and, more importantly, reveals possible ways to stop this growth. The meeting, which marked the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the program, also featured grant recipients who are working towards more effective and less toxic treatments for breast cancer that "target" the unique characteristics of cancer cells and have a limited effect on normal cells.

The Institute of Medicine, in an analysis of the program, overwhelmingly supports the BCRP's continuation, stating "the program fills a unique niche among public and private funding sources for cancer research. It is not duplicative of other programs and is a promising vehicle for forging new ideas and scientific breakthroughs in the nation's fight against breast cancer."

There continue to be millions of American women living with breast cancer, as well as their friends and families, who hope that a means of preventing, curing, and better treating this disease will soon be found. To help further the search for answers, we ask that you fund the DOD BCRP at \$175 million for FY 04.



NITA LOWEY  
Member of Congress

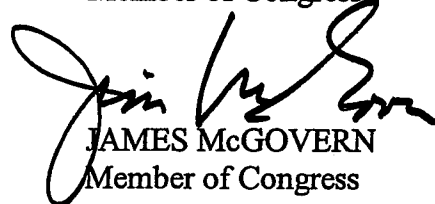
Sincerely,



TOM DAVIS  
Member of Congress



JUDY BIGGERT  
Member of Congress



JAMES MCGOVERN  
Member of Congress

Bill Barwell J. Sue Kelly Susan Davis

Jim Van Vleet ~~Chapman~~ Ann Drummond

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Am. J. Jeffers

Robt Portman Zee Felger

Jim Parnell

Jim Mahall Max Bunn

John Sherry

Mike Dayh Spencer Parker

Spencer Beckley

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Euc Carter

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Joe Harman Tim Holden

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Wanda Vining

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Robert Ant

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Carrie Brown

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Howard Collier

Rubén Hernández Ed Pastor

Salomon P. Ortiz

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Joe Baker Stephen F. Fyeh Frank A. L. Biondo

Mike Mastey Chip Kelly Sue Myrick

Tommy Lee David Drier Pete Stark

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Mike Thompson Mark G. Gable  
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Tom Osborne

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John F. Tunny

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Tom O'Case

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Phil Crave ~~Shane~~ E. Watson

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